United Nations A/50/PV.23

General Assembly

Fiftieth Session

Official Records

23rd plenary meeting
Friday, 6 October 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Mr. Denzil Douglas, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is indeed an honour for me to address this distinguished Assembly. I take pride in conveying to it fraternal and cordial greetings from the new Labour Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The United Nations has made noticeable progress and important strides during the past five decades through sheer determination, assiduity and the unrelenting faith of its Members. This is faith in an Organization that has been able to balance the interests of the weak with those of the strong, faith in our collective will to preserve democracy, promote peace and improve the quality of life for all our peoples. The occasion of the convening of this historic session of the United Nations General Assembly provides an important impetus to galvanize our Governments to reaffirm our commitment to the causes of world peace, international security and development. This faith represents the very essence of what we celebrate not only this year, but every year as well.

Fifty years ago a few men of great courage and vision cast aside national differences to come together to plant new seeds of hope in a future that would one day bear fruit for humankind to enjoy. The historic legacy of cooperation and partnership that triumphed over individualism should burn like an eternal flame in our minds, serving to remind us all that peace, one of the most precious of commodities, is not ours to squander, but merely on loan to us. We have a solemn responsibility to pass it on to future generations. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis salutes those visionaries of half a century ago and thanks them for the rich legacy bequeathed to us all.

I wish to join other delegations in expressing warmest congratulations and good wishes to you, Sir, our new President, elected to preside over the Assembly in this landmark year in the history of the United Nations.

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The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to assure you, Mr. President, of its continued cooperation and support. We are confident that your presidency will be marked by adroit leadership, which will ensure a successful outcome to these deliberations.

On behalf of my Government, I am pleased to express gratitude to the outgoing president, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for his diligence and able guidance in a year characterized by varying degrees of political turmoil and other serious challenges.

I salute the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his tenacious leadership, his goodwill, and his diplomatic skills *par excellence*, which have been tested with great frequency since he took office a few years ago. My Government congratulates the Secretary-General on the outstanding manner in which he has carried out the mandates of the Organization with regard to peace-keeping and humanitarian efforts. As our nations continue to work together to build a better future for our peoples, I wish to assure him of my Government's continued cooperation, support and goodwill.

As regards human rights, my Government is of the view that, as an international fraternity of nations, we find it incumbent on us all to remember that every single human being has an inalienable right to freedom, to the pursuit of happiness and to a better standard of life.

The sanctity of human life is not negotiable; it is paramount. My Government remains steadfast in its own efforts, and supports those of the United Nations to protect and preserve human rights.

I now call attention to the question of representative democracy. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis warmly welcomes the unprecedented pace of democratic reforms taking place around the world. However, we are concerned with the growing complexities of recurrent problems and the emergence of new and more complicated ones which still pose serious threats to world peace and international security.

Consequently, my delegation commends the resolve of the United Nations and its willing leadership to steer Member States along a steady and purposeful course through the turbulent seas of political upheavals.

It is encouraging to see that, despite obvious problems, democracy continues to spring up in the far-flung corners of the world. This should propel us to channel our collective energies into ensuring that those peoples still yearning for a taste of freedom will one day come to experience the triumph of democracy.

The Caribbean breathed a sigh of relief when the horrid spectre of dictatorship was removed from the Haitian landscape. Finally, the people of Haiti can begin to harvest the rewards of peace as they proceed to build a lasting and viable democracy.

At present the Caribbean and Latin America enjoy a period of relative peace and the rule of law. We wish for this to continue infinitely. It is certainly not my intention to be the harbinger of doom. However, we cannot afford to take this situation for granted, because history bears frightening and credible witness to the fact that political instability and poverty in areas where democracy is fragile, tend to form a treacherous alliance.

Democracy as a mere concept, without the requisite support of infrastructural development and institution-building, cannot survive. In order for democracy to remain viable in countries which are unaccustomed to it and/or which suffer from high or increasing levels of poverty, democracy should be buttressed with the appropriate support systems.

My Government firmly believes that the United Nations is a people's Organization. Therefore, we the Members should impress upon the poor masses, which are often easily led and misled, that democracy works, that it can work for them, and that eventually, if given a chance, it will deliver the political and material benefits they require to improve their lives.

I wish to state here clearly that my Government is not appealing for hand-outs. On the contrary, we appeal for a reliable hand of genuine cooperation and partnership. Because our countries share a common world community, with common concerns and interests, we should become our brother's keeper. Failure to work together effectively means that we foreclose the possibility of learning from the past, and at the same time, we shall be burning the bridges to the future, built with selfless courage by our predecessors.

It appears that whenever we succeed in solving one major problem another more complicated one is foisted upon us. The post-cold-war world has given way to the re-emergence of agonizing, old ethnic tensions, worsening levels of poverty and widening economic inequalities which, together, continue to force their way

to the top of the international agenda. These new challenges require innovative and collective strategies. They require partnership.

The prevalence and the length of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia seem to elude attempts at an effective and lasting solution. None the less, we support the international efforts to find a diplomatic resolution of this conflict.

Therefore, my Government welcomes the timely initiatives of the United States Government, which we consider to be crucial in laying the groundwork for future progress in ending the war. Also, we wish to compliment efforts by the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to broker a lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis strongly condemns the outrageous and cowardly acts of genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and indiscriminate killing of the innocent and helpless, on all sides in this brutal conflict. It is my Government's sincerest hope that the persons found to be responsible for these atrocities will be brought to justice.

I wish now to turn to another volatile region, the Middle East, which has for a long time been one of the lingering trouble spots in world affairs.

Times are changing, and in the interest of peace some Governments in the region have begun to respond to these changes by taking appropriate steps to reconcile their differences and to ensure that their peoples can live together in peace. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis applauds the initiatives of the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to rescue peace from the clutches of terrorism and violence. This augurs well for peace not only in the disputed territories but also throughout the Middle East. Further, we urge nations in the region to respect Israel's right to exist and to follow the lead of the recent accord reached between the Governments of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan.

We hope that other countries in the region will heed the call of peace and use diplomacy in the pursuit of their objectives. Also, we urge all Governments to declare war on terrorism and to make a commitment to its eradication, wherever it may lurk. My Government is unambiguous in its belief that an act of terror against any man, anywhere, is an act of terror against all mankind, everywhere.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the decision taken last year by the Iraqi Government to recognize the State of Kuwait. Kuwait's territorial integrity and sovereignty must be maintained. We also call on the Government of Iraq to comply with all United Nations resolutions and to release all Kuwaiti nationals detained illegally in Iraq.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is convinced that the United Nations is about people. Consequently, we expect this Organization to advance the causes of all our peoples. To achieve this, however, Member Governments must fulfil their obligations to the Organization so that it can function more effectively. At the same time, the United Nations has to accept that it is accountable to its vast membership. Also, Member Governments and the Organization should seek to reconcile this critical relationship and work more closely in the future to devise new approaches to problem-solving, development and security. The time has come for us to change the way we do business. Our Government is in favour of the reform of the Security Council to reflect the current configuration of world affairs.

I should like to focus the Assembly's attention on the question of membership. As we all are well aware, one of the fundamental principles of this Organization is that of universality of membership. My Government perceives the United Nations as a people's organization; therefore, we believe that Member States will appreciate the need to consider the timely readmittance of the Republic of China on Taiwan to this body. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that that country's 21 million inhabitants have the right to be appropriately represented in this Organization. Taiwan continues to comply with international law and has taken due steps to ensure the democratization of its politics and respect for and protection of human rights.

I now wish to refer to the important subjects of, first, the vulnerability of small island States and, secondly, sustainable development. Although these issues are not new, my Government remains convinced that the international community cannot afford to forget them. We commend the United Nations for hosting a Conference last year in Barbados to address these crucial issues. However, we need to go further. This will require partnership, cooperation and resolve from both developing and developed nations.

Many small island nations are painfully aware of the potential dangers that environmental degradation holds for small island States like Saint Kitts and Nevis. Some of these dangers are: rising sea levels, coastal erosion, sea pollution and natural disasters. These problems are easily compounded, because small island States with limited resources, such as those in the Caribbean, lack the financial and technological capabilities to deal with them.

The environmental vulnerability of small island States is intricately interwoven with our economic dependency and openness to external forces. My delegation therefore appeals to the international financial community to review its policies on concessional lending to small island States.

Statistics can be quite misleading. The tendency to judge a country and its people's development based on figures such as per capita income quite easily distort the objective reality of our situation.

Just last month, for example, Saint Kitts and Nevis was ravaged by two hurricanes. Unfortunately, the passage of the first was sufficient to disrupt seriously the daily lives of my people, to destroy the physical infrastructure, and to undermine severely the economic life of both islands. My country's main export crop, sugar, was almost completely wiped out, and prospects for the 1996 sugar harvest are discouraging. Further, my country's main hospital suffered extensive damage, placing the health of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis at great risk. I take this opportunity to thank the international community for the quick response in providing emergency relief to the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

This, first and foremost, is the reality of small island States. It is this reality — not cold statistics — that should inform world policies towards them.

Returning to the subject of the environment, my delegation puts forward the view that, to a large extent, our islands have inherited problems that are not always of our own making. This is not meant to lay blame. On the contrary, we wish to suggest that all countries take appropriate measures to reduce the possibility of environmental degradation and that those in a position to help in environmental protection lend assistance to those unable to do so.

My delegation makes a fervent appeal to the developed world not to link the granting of development assistance to guarantees of environmental protection from developing countries. Instead, we propose a much closer and more constructive working relationship aimed at creating more meaningful, long-term strategies to solve environmental problems.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis vehemently condemns attempts by some countries to use the waterways of the Caribbean as a transshipment lane for their toxic and hazardous wastes. Clearly, this region suffers from a high vulnerability index. We therefore cannot afford any increase in this index.

We call on countries responsible to find safer and more appropriate means of dealing with their toxic and hazardous waste.

Saint Kitts and Nevis categorically supports the indefinite, unconditional extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and we anxiously await the successful conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Also, we urge all nations to impose a ban on nuclear tests.

With regard to women in development, we applaud the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to examine issues affecting women throughout the world. We appeal to Member States to go beyond the conference halls and to make genuine efforts to promote the interests of women. The protection of human rights and the pursuit of sustainable development cannot be viewed as distinct from the development of women and their rights. They must go hand in hand.

Women play a central and critical role in the process of development. Their contributions should be recognized and rewarded appropriately. My Government is committed to further legislation to eliminate gender discrimination and to institute policies that address the inequalities that women face.

We also have a duty to protect the lives of our children and to ensure that we provide them with adequate protection for their individual growth and future prosperity. We hold their future in trust, and we therefore have a sacred responsibility to them, as well as to future generations.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis strongly condemns any form of discrimination and violence against women and children. We urge all Governments to wage war on the barbarism of child prostitution, infanticide and abortion on discovery that the foetus is

female. The right to life is fundamental, universal and sacred.

In conclusion, the catalogue of problems confronting our nations bears ample testimony to the tremendous tasks ahead of us. Our countries share common goals such as the pursuit of peace, world security, and better standards of living for all our peoples.

Our predecessors have sown the seeds, and today we celebrate their legacy. My Government is convinced that we can achieve our individual goals by working collectively. And indeed we can. I know we can. Most importantly, we owe it to those who elected us, as well as to those who will follow.

As we, the peoples of the world, celebrate our past achievements, let us resolve to achieve even greater successes in the years ahead.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on whom I now call.

Mr. Gurirab (Namibia): Mr. President, Namibia joins the preceding speakers in extending sincere congratulations and best wishes to you upon your unanimous election. This also goes for your esteemed General Committee, of which Namibia is a proud member.

This historic session of the General Assembly — marking the golden jubilee of our Organization — coincides with the fifth anniversary of Namibia's independence, brought about through a long and bitter struggle and the sacrifices of the Namibian people and, no less, in partnership with the United Nations, which played a crucial role in the process of our country's decolonization. We are filled with immense joy and satisfaction over this happy coincidence.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, my good brother and colleague, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly with great skill, wisdom and dedication. I commend him for a job well done and, in particular, for bringing excellence and industry to this important office, all aimed at partnership and development. In this context, Namibia will fully cooperate with the presidency of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in pursuit of our common objectives that have been assigned to various open-ended working groups aimed at restructuring and strengthening the United Nations.

This special commemorative session of the General Assembly will bring together a record number of world leaders including, naturally, the Head of State of the Republic of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma, for a big celebration, collective stock-taking, introspection and reflection, and for renewed commitment to action on the basis of a new vision for the future and rededication towards peace, development, gender equality, tolerance and brotherhood in this, our one global village.

The cardinal purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, since its adoption in 1945, have been these: to save lives, to liberate all those everywhere still in bondage, to promote democratic ideals and values, to protect and defend human rights and civil liberties — codified subsequently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — and, above all, to protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which has wrought so much devastation and human suffering in the world in the course of this century.

In furtherance of these purposes and principles and their early realization, our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has applied his mind and energy to the challenges of our times by formulating two seminal documents — "An Agenda for Peace" and "An Agenda for Development". These timely and compelling initiatives call for international cooperation, as well as for the allocation of new and additional resources. Indeed, they also place domestic obligations on Governments and civil societies alike.

Specifically, in the context of the fiftieth anniversary session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has submitted a comprehensive annual report, complete with focused recommendations for action on various fronts. Namibia therefore pays a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in the service

of the United Nations and for fresh initiatives to further advance peace and development in the world.

Reviewing history and past achievements, on this occasion marking the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, is necessarily in order. At the same time, however, balancing present challenges and opportunities requires leadership, vision, commitment and courage on the part of world leaders. Let us hope that this commemorative session will show the way forward and achieve the desired objectives.

The most important of all the commitments that the global community must fulfil is to use the collective political will and resources of the States Members the United Nations

> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

This is the soul of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, the world is united behind the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Let me, however, hasten to add that the eradication of poverty on a sustainable basis, through the provision of adequate education, health care, employment and housing and the empowerment of women, needs to be placed at the top of the priority list of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which have been playing a vital role in social and economic development.

With the hindsight of 50 years, we know that the United Nations was at the start, and remains today, more than a mere response to the horrors and circumstances of the Second World War and its tormenting legacies. It is a sacred trust of life itself and an indispensable vehicle for the preservation of civilization, in the interests of all nations and peoples.

One of those tormenting legacies was the cold war. The hopes and expectations of millions the world over were held hostage for decades by the politics of confrontation and the division of the world into hostile military blocs and rival ideological camps. This resulted in the derailing of the purposes and objectives for which the United Nations stands.

The arms race and espionage, as well as competing alignments, seriously sapped the vital resources, time and energies of nations, creating more and more hotbeds of tension, thus militating against peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial inter-State relations.

Fortunately, a nuclear holocaust was averted. A third world war did not happen. But violence, distrust and military build-up characterized world affairs for a very long time. During this dangerous period the planet Earth teetered on the brink of a ghastly disaster. In the face of all this, men and women of peace, wisdom and compassion, from all corners of the Earth, kept raising voices of reason and appealing for sanity, disarmament and dialogue.

Decolonization is perhaps the most laudable achievement of the United Nations. The world witnessed an unprecedented and unstoppable wave of demands, by millions the world over, for freedom and the exercise of the right to self-determination. This, happily, led to the achievement of independence by so many countries in Asia, Latin America — especially the Caribbean — and Africa, which swelled the membership of the United Nations beyond 100. Today the number of Members, at 185, is more than three times the original number — the 51 founding nations of 1945.

In Namibia, the moment came for the United Nations to put its resources where its convictions and responsibilities were. It demonstrated its firm commitment by providing necessary funds and technical capacity to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), which facilitated Namibia's smooth transition to nationhood in 1990. This success story stands out today as a model of successful United Nations peace-keeping and decolonization.

Other major United Nations success stories followed — in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Haiti. We hope for the same positive outcome in Angola and other places. In all these cases, what ensured success was a combination of political consensus, peace-keeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance.

It has been said many times in so many ways that if the United Nations had not existed, collective yearning to create it would have been irresistible. That is why Namibia attaches great importance to its membership of the United Nations. Since joining the United Nations, Namibia has been playing an active role in all the activities of the Organization. Namibia participated in the peace-keeping operation in Cambodia and sent election observers to Angola under United Nations auspices. Namibia also sent a legal expert as a rapporteur to

represent the Human Rights Commission in Somalia. But more than that, Namibia has been paying its assessed and voluntary contributions on time and in full, for we believe membership is not enough: without resources the Organization cannot carry out its mandate.

As we look towards the next millennium, I should like to state the position of the Government of the Republic of Namibia on the following issues: regional cooperation; international economic cooperation; major United Nations conferences; nuclear disarmament; and reform of the United Nations.

Regional cooperation: in southern Africa, member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which now includes Mauritius, have combined their efforts to bring about genuine reconstruction and development in our subregion. Peace is a prerequisite of development. Without sustainable development, there can be neither peace nor stability. While achievement of peace has created favourable conditions for socio-economic development in southern Africa, the scars of apartheid and destabilization remain. For example, to realize these objectives, States members of SADC have decided to pool their resources in order to implement joint projects in the fields of energy and water. With this in mind, several protocols were signed at the recent SADC Summit in Johannesburg.

Additional areas in which SADC member States are coordinating their policies include de-mining, combating crime, gun-running, drug-trafficking, money-laundering, illicit cross-border trade, and other forms of criminal activity. It is hoped that these efforts will lead to an ideal situation allowing for free movement of people, capital, goods and services, thereby transforming SADC into a community of shared experiences and aspirations. Moreover, mechanisms for conflict resolution, political consultation and peace-keeping are enjoying high priority among these regional concerns.

I felt reinforced after listening to the inspiring statement delivered this morning by my brother and colleague, His Excellency, Mr. Alfred Nzo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa. May I reassure him here of Namibia's firm commitment to continue working closely with the Government and people of South Africa for the achievement of genuine peace, stability, development and prosperity throughout southern Africa.

The completion of the Trans-Caprivi and Trans-Kalahari highways connecting land-locked neighbouring countries to the Namibian port of Walvis Bay will further strengthen regional cooperation, trade and integration. We do all this pursuant to the letter and spirit of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. There is no doubt that a successful SADC will strengthen the African Economic Community.

On international economic cooperation, Namibia subscribes to the view, emphasized by the Economic and Social Council at its last meeting, that development cannot flourish in the midst of conflict and instability. It follows from this that mutually beneficial economic cooperation is not possible as long as an unjust international economic system exists. Until we all become equal partners in the global economy, developing countries, especially African countries, will for ever remain underdeveloped. Contrary to the views being expressed in some quarters, Namibia maintains that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization have played a vital and constructive role in assisting developing countries.

The strengthening of South-South cooperation is more than ever a vehicle that is needed for the enhancement of the trade and economic development of the countries of the South. Namibia therefore supports the South Centre and appeals for financial and material contributions to its programmes.

It is also Namibia's firm belief that the recently inaugurated African-Latin American Institute, with regional headquarters in Namibia and Uruguay respectively, will further strengthen South-South cooperation. Namibia also welcomes the emerging initiatives aimed at encouraging horizontal dialogue and cooperation among SADC, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and other economic groupings of the countries of the South.

As regards major United Nations conferences, we may say that never before in the history of our Organization have the social needs of humankind taken centre stage. Humanity has recognized that conservation of the environment is tantamount to preservation of human life; respect for and protection of human rights is the basis for democracy, good governance and development; addressing population issues within the framework of development is necessary in order to

identify the impact of socio-demographic trends on the well-being of people; peace is not only the absence of war but also a necessary condition for the attainment of social and economic development; and gender equality is central to development and peace.

The realization of the commitments made at all these conferences should form the centrepiece of the agenda for the twenty-first century.

For Namibia, protection of the environment is enshrined in our Constitution. The promotion and defence of democracy and human rights have become the vital pillars of Namibia's Government and society. In keeping with the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Namibia has fully integrated population issues into its First National Development Plan.

Similarly, the commitments we made at the World Summit for Social Development continue to be a top priority of the Government. The Law Reform Commission is finalizing recommendations to the Namibian Parliament for enactment of the necessary legislation.

Namibia is proud of its contribution to the preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women and the honour bestowed upon its delegation to serve as Rapporteur-General at that Conference, in Beijing. It therefore goes without saying that Namibia will do everything possible to ensure implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Conference.

The scientific and technological achievements of humankind should be used for peace and development. All weapons of mass destruction must be destroyed. The time has come for complete nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, Namibia calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil the commitment made at the last Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to move speedily towards the destruction of all nuclear weapons. In this regard, Namibia deplores the new spate of nuclear testing. Namibia will continue to participate actively towards the early completion of the draft treaty of the denuclearization of Africa.

With regard to United Nations reform, Namibia believes that the decision-making machinery of the Security Council, as it exists today, cannot effectively serve the international community in the twentieth century. The phenomenal numerical growth in the membership of the United Nations must be reflected in representation on the Security Council. The reform, restructuring and enlargement of the Security Council should reflect the cardinal principles of sovereign equality of all States, universality, democracy and transparency. It is only in this way that the authority, legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Security Council can be ensured.

Namibia sees no problem in the addition of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council. But at the same time, it is Namibia's strong view that Africa, Asia and Latin America are entitled to representation as permanent members as well as through the allocation of additional seats in the Security Council for non-permanent members. What we seek is the acceptance of the principle. The mechanism of how to bring this about is the subject of ongoing consultations in the relevant Open-ended Working Group. The new world order has no place, in Namibia's view, for the outmoded veto power, and it must be abolished.

The new world order, which is thought of as offering the best hope for economic cooperation and free trade, should liberate itself from the remaining shackles of the cold war and replace confrontation with dialogue wherever differences still exist.

Namibia welcomes the latest agreement on Palestinian self-rule, signed between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We look forward to the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, leading to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The decolonization of Africa is not yet complete. Namibia therefore supports the early exercise by the Saharan people of their right to self-determination on the basis of a free, fair and transparent referendum in Western Sahara, under the joint supervision and control of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

There can be no military solution to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict. Therefore, Namibia urges all parties involved to end the suffering of their people and find a lasting and peaceful political solution to that conflict.

As the year comes to an end, it is heartening to note that the conflict in Liberia has been resolved with the establishment of a broad-based, multi-party provisional Government. We welcome this wholeheartedly. Let us

hope that this is a good omen for the resolution of the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Since the signing of the Lusaka Protocol on Angola last year, the peace process in that sisterly country is making steady progress. The spirit of reconciliation and dialogue is permeating the entire society, encouraged by the regular face-to-face talks between President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola and Mr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA. It is Namibia's sincere hope that the pledges made in Brussels at the recent round-table conference on Angola will be translated into actual resources for reconstruction and development in that country, a neighbour of ours.

Africa is long overdue to root out, once and for all, all the criminal activities of mercenaries, which, like acts of terrorism, stand condemned in the resolutions of both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. The latest *coup* on one of the islands of the Comoros has made this an extremely serious matter which now calls for urgent action by the international community. Namibia therefore welcomes the action taken to restore the Government and law and order on the island.

The address His Holiness Pope John Paul II delivered from this rostrum yesterday was a thoughtful message conveying optimism, hope and good will as we stand on the threshold of the next millennium. The Pope stressed universal love and family, subjects which embrace the entire human race.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere wish that this historic commemorative session of the General Assembly will not fail to highlight public awareness of the work of the United Nations and the continued relevance of the Organization to the lives of individuals and communities everywhere. The vision of the founders 50 years ago focused on the welfare and security of succeeding generations. Nations and peoples, as represented by non-governmental organizations, should move forward together into the next millennium for a better world in which children will feel safer.

The President: I now call on the Chairperson of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, Her Excellency Mrs. Annette des Iles.

Mrs. des Iles (Trinidad and Tobago): It is a great honour for me to extend to you, Sir, warmest congratulations, on behalf of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the urgent need to respond to a number of major questions facing the Organization make this a singularly important year. We are confident that with your vision and leadership you will guide this historic Assembly session to a successful conclusion.

My delegation would also like to express its deep appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for the able manner in which he presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We are also particularly pleased to welcome the small island State of Palau as the one hundred and eighty-fifth Member of the United Nations.

Most States represented in this Hall were not present at the historic signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco 50 years ago, but on gaining independence they applied for membership in this Organization as an essential part of their quest for a secure and stable international environment and improved standards of living. Trinidad and Tobago, a small democratic State, which gained its independence in 1962, was no exception.

Since 1962, when we became a Member of the United Nations, there have been profound changes in international relations and consequent increases in the responsibilities of this Organization. The most dramatic of these changes was the end of the cold war, which engendered a certain optimism that there would be an anticipated peace dividend which would provide impetus to international cooperation for development. Unfortunately this was not to be. The end of the cold war triggered an almost unprecedented surge of ethnic and nationalist conflict, which proceeded to consume much of the attention and resources of the international community.

Our Organization has had to adapt quickly to meet these challenges. There was a sudden and meteoric rise in the volume and, indeed, the complexity of United Nations peace-keeping activities. The Organization has had its share of successes and disappointments. However, despite the failure to meet growing expectations, the United Nations can be justly proud of many of its achievements in the field of peace-keeping, in the restoration of democracy, and in its response to emergency situations. The successes in Central America, Cambodia, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa bear

ample testimony to the effective role the United Nations can play in the advancement of peace, justice and security.

In our region, the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States in the restoration of the democratically elected President of Haiti shows what can be accomplished once the necessary political will exists in support of such actions. In this regard, we welcome the recently held legislative and local elections in Haiti, which, in spite of difficulties, saw thousands of Haitians assemble peacefully and safely to cast their ballots. We are confident that these developments will serve to enhance Haiti's efforts to consolidate democracy, and will assist in the process of national reconciliation. The international community must continue to assist the Government and people of Haiti in the post-emergency period and in their long-term efforts to achieve economic and social reconstruction.

In the Middle East, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the interim agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on the expansion of Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank, which was signed in Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995. It represents another significant advance in the process towards lasting peace in the region.

As for the former Yugoslavia, we are encouraged by the efforts on the part of all sides in the conflict to come to the negotiating table, and we express the hope that this development will significantly advance the process towards peace and stability in that war-torn region.

On the African continent, the spirit of reconciliation which has prevailed in some areas of conflict gives us hope that some of the seemingly more intractable problems can also be resolved. The international community must fulfil its responsibilities in assisting the process.

Earlier this year the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons decided to extend the Treaty indefinitely. The Conference also adopted a number of principles and objectives, one of which called for the completion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty no later than the third quarter of 1996. It was also the understanding of the international community that there would be no further nuclear tests, pending the entry into force of that treaty. Trinidad and Tobago has joined other parties to the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Treaties in rejecting current nuclear testing by some nuclear-weapon States, and appeals to those States to heed the mounting requests to cease nuclear testing.

Related to our environmental concerns over nuclear testing is the equally critical issue of the marine transport of irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium and high-level radioactive wastes. These shipments continue to take place despite the potentially catastrophic effects on small island developing States, whose fragile and vulnerable economies are overwhelmingly dependent on their marine and coastal resources, and who possess neither the resources nor the capability to deal with possible accidents of this nature. My delegation would therefore like to reiterate the priority concern which we attach to this issue, and to urge the shipment countries to respect the wishes of the small island developing States and other *en route* States, which have called for an end to these shipments through their archipelagic and territorial waters as well as their exclusive economic zones.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations will be a time for reflection and re-examination of the activities of the Organization, not only as they relate to conflict situations but, equally, in the field of development as a necessary precondition for peace and as the best guarantee of long-term stability.

At the national level, Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken a programme of economic reform and restructuring of the economy, which is almost complete. Our development focus has been on the pursuit of a sound macroeconomic policy based on a number of measures, which include a disciplined fiscal stance and the consistent implementation of an orderly and broad-based divestment programme, the enactment of structural and legislative reforms designed to provide an environment for the growth of a resilient and internationally competitive private sector and one conducive to greater foreign investment, the liberalization of the trade and exchange-rate regimes aimed at enhancing our competitiveness and a comprehensive programme of reform of the domestic financial system. Emphasis has also been placed on the reform of the public sector and the provision of basic infrastructure in order to ensure the efficient delivery of reliable, high-quality services, the progressive restructuring of our educational system so as to put in place a sustainable human-resource development programme which would respond to the new challenges and needs of our development, and the employment of social policies aimed at protecting the most vulnerable in our society. In order to succeed, however, these measures must be complemented by a supportive regional and international environment.

For small States, regional integration is an imperative, and, increasingly, regional cooperation systems are seen as providing the essential building blocks on which to construct hemispheric and wider international cooperation. At the last Conference of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government, held at Georgetown from 4 to 7 July, Trinidad and Tobago was pleased to welcome Suriname as the fourteenth member of the Caribbean Community.

The successful inaugural summit meeting of the Association of Caribbean States, which was held at Port of Spain from 17 to 18 August 1995, has also opened a new chapter in the history of cooperation among countries of the wider Caribbean. The adoption of the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action on Tourism, Trade and Transportation provides a practical blueprint to foster development and enhance economic integration among all countries of the Caribbean. In this context, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates the importance we attach to the full reintegration of Cuba in the Western Hemisphere.

I have already alluded to the need to achieve greater balance in United Nations activities in the fields of peace-keeping and development. The need for such a balance assumes even greater urgency when one recognizes that to an increasing extent the nature, scope and complexity of development challenges today are beyond the limits and control of the nation State.

To the traditionally elusive development problems of persistent poverty, debilitating debt, declining levels of official development assistance, unemployment, demographic pressures and the worsening income gap and terms of trade between developed and developing countries, one must add the new and additional challenges of environmental degradation and globalization. Some of these will continue to require a national approach, but the great majority of them are beyond the limits of national action and thus require a common commitment, a common approach, and a call to global neighbourhood action.

The notion of shared responsibilities and the recognition of the need for mechanisms for collective action are the *raison d'être* of the United Nations system. A coordinated and integrated United Nations system that is focused and adequately funded thus remains the best hope for effectively dealing with these myriad and complex development challenges.

I can think of no better way to refocus and recommit the United Nations to the goals of development and global security for all than through the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive action-oriented agenda for development. An agenda which continues to address traditional development problems while simultaneously tackling the questions of protectionism, capital flows, reform of the international economic decision-making processes and management of the global economy must be the focus of our efforts.

At the recent Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, the international community recognized the crucial role that women play in the development process and acknowledged that effective international cooperation for development will remain an elusive goal unless women can participate fully in the political, economic and social life of their respective societies. The Beijing Conference, along with the other global conferences held at Rio, Barbados, Cairo and Copenhagen, have served to buttress the case for an integrated approach to sustainable development, which must be informed by environmental, social, demographic, gender and human- resource considerations. The agenda for development must therefore seek to implement and fulfil, in an integrated manner, the commitments arising out of these Conferences.

Within the agenda for development particular consideration must also be given to assisting developing countries, especially those with small and vulnerable economies in advancing their economic transformation and in facilitating their greater participation in the world economy.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to free trade and to placing its economy on a development path compatible with the demands of the new global order. However, as the challenges of globalization have demonstrated, national policies are not enough. To achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development we need a supportive and favourable international economic environment as well as a fair, open and non-discriminatory trading system, one which recognizes that small and vulnerable economies like our own are at a particular disadvantage because of our size and the lack of economies of scale. No effort must therefore be spared to ensure that we are provided with the necessary market access so critical to our trade-expansion and development objectives. Indeed, to do anything less within the agenda for development would be a denial of the fact that globalization has now placed an even greater responsibility on the major developed countries to ensure

that their macroeconomic policies are favourable to growth and development in the rest of the world.

Trinidad and Tobago is also of the view that the agenda for development offers an opportunity to develop the global partnership for sustainable development and to promote the implementation of the agreements reached at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In this process, the special situation and needs of small island developing States and the recognition of their environmental vulnerability must receive priority attention. Trinidad and Tobago therefore wishes to reiterate the particular importance we attach to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In the Caribbean, recent devastating hurricanes have once again dramatically demonstrated the fragility of the ecosystems and the vulnerability of the economies of small islands. We are grateful to those Member States which have joined CARICOM countries in providing emergency assistance, and we appeal to the international community to continue its support for reconstruction efforts in the affected countries.

The General Assembly will be called upon at this session to make several critical decisions relating to the future of the United Nations system. Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the elements of the reform exercise currently before the Assembly constitute a good basis for a more effective United Nations.

Indeed, Member States must use the momentum provided by this fiftieth-anniversary session to reach an agreement to expand the Security Council so as to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness, to resolve the critical financial situation of the United Nations, to complete an action-oriented and comprehensive Agenda for Development with adequate and predictable resources for its implementation, and to strike a reasonable balance between resources for peace-keeping and for development.

Reform, however, cannot be an end in itself. It is but a means to an end, and it will only be meaningful if we are united in the view that a strengthened and revitalized United Nations is an imperative, given the inescapable reality of today's global village; that the world of the future will need more, not fewer, effective international collaborative mechanisms to confront common threats; and that the United Nations remains the only available instrument for the necessary global effort required to tackle these challenges.

The critical financial situation of the United Nations must be a source of concern to all Member States. The Secretary-General has described with increasing urgency and frustration the difficulties he is facing in carrying out the tasks entrusted to him because of a lack of the necessary resources. The failure, in particular, of the largest contributor to pay its legally assessed contributions has placed the Organization on the brink of insolvency. There must therefore be a greater commitment on the part of all Member States to meet their obligations, as well as a greater manifestation of will to resolve the overall financial situation of the United Nations. Unless we demonstrate this commitment, the paeans of praise with which we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary will have a very hollow ring.

At this fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, let us recall the opening words of the United Nations Charter:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims."

In a spirit of global partnership, we must renew our resolve, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter, to ensure the realization of the objectives for which the Organization was established: peace, equality, justice and development for all. Trinidad and Tobago pledges to work with others to confront the challenges that face our Organization as we move towards the twenty-first century.

The President: I call next on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba.

Mr. Oye Mba (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): As I address the General Assembly on behalf of the Gabonese Republic, I wish first of all to discharge the duty of sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and on my own account, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the fiftieth session. The Assembly's choice reflects the appreciation of all States Members of the United Nations for the contribution of your country, Portugal, to the quest for solutions to the problems besetting the world. Your election highlights your talents as a diplomat and statesman and your wide experience.

It gives me pleasure also to express our gratitude and admiration to your predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire. The Gabonese Republic hails that fine diplomat and thanks him for the dedication and readiness to act he placed in the service of the world Organization at the forty-ninth session; his work was a source of pride for the entire African continent.

I cannot fail to mention the Gabonese Republic's staunch support for the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his tireless efforts in the service of peace, security and development.

Mr. Kulla (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I wish now to say a few words about the unique nature of this session, during which the Assembly will convene in special meetings to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. At those special meetings, Heads of State or Government will have an opportunity to assess the impact of some of the action we have taken pursuant to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. True, those purposes have not been completely fulfilled, but in all fairness we must acknowledge that there has been considerable progress, especially on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and peace, without which nothing is possible. Yet development remains a major concern, despite the efforts that have been devoted to it.

Every nation represented here is a reflection of mankind, whose common values the founders of the United Nations evoked. Among those values I would highlight those of greatest concern at the end of the twentieth century: peace, freedom and development.

Gabon's dedication to the ideal of peace is a constant element in its foreign policy and its diplomacy. The inclusion of that ideal in the Charter was most appealing to the leadership of Gabon and eased our accession to membership of the United Nations, on 20 September 1960. Hence, as a Member of the United Nations we took our proper place alongside other nations, in the harmony of our respective differences.

I wish to pay tribute to the founders of non-alignment, who were the first to reflect in deeds, through the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, the principles enshrined in the San Francisco Charter. Twenty-five years later, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly confirm that interpretation. We are duty-bound to go back to the source in order to respond to the need — the urgent need — for new, creative thinking in favour of peace.

It is an honour and a duty to recall that Gabon's experience in the settlement of conflicts has its living roots deep in Bantu civilization. Our view of solidarity among peoples gives a role to Gabon's commitment to cooperate with all States Members of the United Nations whatever their ideology or the nature of their political regime. This promotes the virtues of dialogue and tolerance among peoples and nations, virtues we practice in our homes and within our families, virtues that, through the international action of President Omar Bongo, the Gabonese Republic has built into a principle of our diplomatic and political culture.

Our idea of peace, then, is primarily functional in nature. It reminds us every day that the state of peace among nations is a continuous process, one which requires at all times vigilance, courage and consistency in our efforts. Gabon can state with pride that it is dedicated to the peaceful conduct of its relations with all the components of the international community.

"We are judged by our actions", a great thinker quite rightly observed. Those actions that we have been able to inscribe in the registry of peace, both bilaterally and multilaterally, follow the path traced by the Charter of the United Nations. They illustrate, first of all, our unswerving loyalty to the Organization, which makes us automatically involved in all the missions and all the actions it has undertaken anywhere in the world where peace has been threatened or might be threatened. The efforts made quite recently by the international community to heal the open wounds in Rwanda have had our full support. The efforts made by the same international community in Angola have often been supplemented by our direct or indirect involvement. It goes without saying that with regard to these situations my country appeals to the community of nations to continue its multifaceted assistance for the reintegration and rebuilding of those two countries. This appeal is addressed also to all the other areas of tension in Africa and in the rest of the world.

These actions are also illustrated by our appreciation of and satisfaction with the progress achieved in the quest for peace in the Middle East with the signing of the Taba Agreement in Washington; and in Central Europe as a result of the new atmosphere brought about by discussions that made it possible for all the parties involved in the situation in the former Yugoslavia to meet together in New York. In our view, all these factors bear witness to the fact that the international community is

prepared to attenuate as much as possible the anguish caused our peoples by the risks of war in the world.

Nevertheless, every one of us would readily agree that real threats to peace in international relations still exist today. The outline of a new world order is still hard for us to grasp; it shows us the paradoxical picture of a fragile peace. Yet our expectations of the establishment of this new world order are not fruitless. For the time being, Gabon gives due value to the dynamics which led, at the global and regional levels, to the creation of the mechanisms designed to prevent conflicts.

While peace has the virtue of making us feel safer, freedom can open up prospects for individual and collective development. In the view of the founders of the United Nations, freedom is a decisive element for the establishment of an environment and an overall spiritual framework allowing for the emergence of social progress and the establishment of better living conditions. Those who signed the Charter received a mandate, as it were, to create the conditions for this, to the benefit of the people in their care. The results of this commitment to implement the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination and the principle of respect for human rights are known to all, just as we all know of, and regard highly, the actions taken by our Organization to inspire, to support and even to initiate policies undertaken in these fields. In this context, any policy contrary to this which calls these achievements into question will give rise to the reactions necessary to preserve the balance between States and to restore everyone's rights. Therefore, our dedication to the principle of the inviolability of borders in Africa is a guarantee of our independence and our freedom, since it shows that we accept freedom for other States as well.

My country's experience in promoting and protecting basic political, cultural and social human rights in recent years has been outstanding. The establishment of a State based on the rule of law with a transition from a single-party system to a pluralist democracy has taken place smoothly. The results of this transition, and the promises born of this experience for democracy in our country, flowed from the fact that they dovetail with our cultural values, whose spiritual foundations favour the individual's place in society, as the founder of and justification for our cities.

In Gabon, dialogue is valid only for human beings since it is human beings who initiate it and carry it out for their own benefit. An example of this Gabonese practice of dialogue was the results achieved barely a year ago at the meeting held by representatives of the majority and opposition political parties in Paris in September and October 1994 to define together the ways and means for the consensual governance of our democracy that was then being threatened. These results will be reflected in the signing of the so-called Paris Agreements in the presence of international observers.

Social conflicts and confrontations between opposing political forces can be overcome by rational discussions and tolerance of the opinions of others. We are truly convinced that *coups d'état* are not relevant in present times. That is why Gabon, through its President, Omar Bongo, firmly condemned the unfortunate events which occurred in Sao Tome and Principe, and more recently in the Comoros.

Freedom, security and peace are in our view the very bases of our democracy. To be sure, this democracy is only taking its first steps, but it will undoubtedly enable the Gabonese people to reach a new stage in its history and its political life.

Another dimension of the political and social problems in Africa and everywhere in the world is the status of women in society. In my country, women have the same rights as men. Our educational system ensures free access by all school-age children to instruction; that is in the interest of the entire Gabonese nation. In social terms, then, taking into account the recent concerns relating to the status of women and children, as illustrated in the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, and the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Republic of Gabon has made choices that are in line with the spirit of the actions initiated by the United Nations.

Once again, I would mention the founders of our Organization and praise their generosity of spirit in placing the happiness of peoples in the context of extending freedom.

The solidarity advocated for States as the absolute prerequisite for defining ensuing strategies was designed to discourage them from any inclination of selfishness in the implementation of those strategies.

Unfortunately, however, we must admit that this legacy has, instead, come to look more like "every man for himself", a standard that has been set up as providing the ways and means to find happiness. The differences among nations have revealed the gaps between peoples the world over at the level of their development.

However, in this sphere, the United Nations has tried to create a range of instruments and mechanisms designed to provide our Governments with the assistance they expect. Whatever the allegiance of the peoples represented here, each and every one of us will acknowledge and appreciate, for example, the role of UNESCO in education, science and culture; of the World Health Organization on the basis of its contribution to the eradication of major endemic and pandemic diseases; or that of the United Nations Development Programme in carrying out development projects.

Nevertheless, the overall verdict is still mixed. We believe that although our actions have allowed humanity to survive, they have not fully succeeded in improving the quality of life for most people. In both the South and the North, our world is still littered, not just with pockets but with vast tracts of poverty. All our States, small or large, are being eaten away, to various degrees, by the cancer of abject poverty.

The United Nations recent decision to hold a world summit in Copenhagen devoted to social development was welcomed by Gabon, which was an active participant. President Bongo himself said that that Summit was the result of an in-depth analysis of the state of extreme poverty in which a large part of humanity was living today.

Consequently, for our country, the programme of action drawn up at the end of the Summit — which, we are pleased to say, follows up the major guidelines already found in the United Nations programme of action for the establishment of a new international economic order, on the one hand, and the major principles of "An Agenda for Development", on the other — should be translated into action, as hoped.

We are all aware that, by the same token, this endeavour will require the mobilized contribution of all of the countries and bodies that constitute the international community.

At the close of the twentieth century, Africa alone will have broken all records for underdevelopment. By way of example, it has three quarters of the least developed countries; it has the lowest level of growth; it is practically non-existent in international trade. Unfortunately, Africa is today a continent apart, despite its enormous potential.

It, nevertheless, accepts the fact that responsibility for economic recovery is largely in its hands and that this task depends above all on its own efforts. But it is still obvious that the enormity of the crisis it is going through and the level of resources needed make international support for its efforts necessary.

For Africa in general and for Gabon more particularly, a more appropriate approach to the debt burden would favour a solution to this issue, given the substantial inverse capital flows going to our creditors as a result of paying back our debt.

Africa wishes to remind the world of its commitment to face its responsibilities with regard to debt and debt servicing. This was the position adopted by our Heads of State at the most recent Summit of the Organization of African Unity. Gabon supports this. However, it looks to the shrewdness of its creditors and in the understandable interest of all parties concerned in this issue, to help us obtain favourable treatment in conditions for repayment.

Gabon effectively devotes more than half of its annual budget to debt repayment, thereby crippling its development efforts — this in spite of the fact that the machinery for debt reduction advocated in recent years has discriminated against us by excluding us from the list of beneficiaries. We suggest that the reason given, based on the high per capita gross national product, is unfair.

This strange singling out of Gabon, which is still almost the only country in the so-called middle-income category in the southern Sahara, is not justified in reality. This situation places a burden on our economy and thereby affects our economic relations abroad.

This appeal to the international community for fairer treatment of my country is not a case of begging — no more for Gabon than for the rest of Africa — because, as Omar Bongo stated at the Copenhagen summit: "Africa is not asking for charity".

In reality, helping our credibility and viability in economic and financial terms, actually strengthens the international trading system for the common good. This is not a matter of philanthropy but rather of common sense: helping the South means helping the North, and ultimately the entire world.

At the end of this rapid reading before this Assembly, dealing with the themes of peace, freedom and development, my appeals to our Organization will be clear to all. It is expected to respond to the concerns I have just expressed.

On the eve of the special meeting to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization, I hope that all of its Members will realize the enormous import of this opportunity, for the world is changing before our very eyes. The countries represented here are also changing, at different rates. Obviously, I cannot accept the idea that the United Nations itself could fail to keep up with this trend.

For this reason, the measures advocated along these lines by the Secretary-General of the United Nations could be supplemented by others that my country would like to see, from the point of view of restructuring, and therefore readapting the United Nations system to the realities of today's world.

The present context is conducive to this. An overall reform of the system is required, for the security of our peoples, and of the States that comprise it, and in the final analysis, in the interest of renewing the United Nations itself.

I conclude my speech, therefore, on this note of hope.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Ahmat Abderaman Haggar.

Mr. Haggar (Chad) (*interpretation from French*): Half a century ago the representatives of some 50 nations met in San Francisco, in the United States, to create a new world order for the post-war period. The founding fathers sought to define rules and conduct enabling the countries of the whole world to live free and safe from the scourge of war. They gave the United Nations certain purposes that were as noble as they were ambitious, such as, to mention only a few, the maintenance of international peace and security; the promotion of progress and international development; respect for human rights and the rights of peoples; and international cooperation.

While we rightly rejoice at the results obtained in some of these areas, we must note that in others, concern persists regarding the many internal conflicts and economic and social crises that confront some of our States.

It was in an atmosphere of hope, but also uncertainty, that His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral was elected to guide the work of this session which must address the aspirations for peace and well-being of our peoples. My delegation is happy at his election and warmly congratulates him, convinced that his intellectual qualities and diplomatic skills will ensure success in our deliberations. We assure the President of our full cooperation.

I wish also to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, who skilfully guided the proceedings of our previous session.

I should like to reiterate our deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who since his election as the head of our Organization has resolutely sought to find solutions to our world's many problems.

Our Organization has succeeded in sparing humanity a third world war, but areas of concern remain. Before addressing them, I should like to briefly describe the situation in my country, and particularly the efforts that my Government has made to solve both political and as socio-economic problems.

At the last session the Chadian delegation described to the Assembly the progress that we had made towards the democratization of political life. Today I can report that this has become a tangible reality. We have put machinery and structures in place to enable the Chadian people freely and openly to choose their institutions and their leaders. I refer in particular to the Independent National Electoral Commission, responsible for supervising and monitoring the preparation of electoral rolls and organizing the various elections; the Supreme Council for Communications, charged with guaranteeing equitable access to the media to political parties, civil society and individual citizens; and the Constitutional Court, which is to settle electoral disputes, among other things. It is important to emphasize that all shades of political and social opinion are represented in these bodies.

The liberalization of political life can also be seen in the existence of 53 recognized parties as well as a number of civil associations and trade unions. Moreover, a draft constitution agreed by all those involved in civil and political life will soon be put to the vote in a referendum. I can state from this rostrum that the democratic process is under way and that Chad is merely awaiting the various votes to conclude it.

The President of the Republic, General Idriss Déby, stated at this year's presentation of New Year's greetings from the Diplomatic Corps that he was determined to do his utmost to ensure that the votes were transparent and took place in the best possible conditions. Despite this

solemn commitment, some of those involved in political life, manipulated from abroad, are trying desperately to hoodwink national and international public opinion by saying that the Government are responsible for delaying the votes. We reiterate the commitment of the Head of State and invite all those who wish to do so, to come to Chad and observe the various election processes.

I should like to extend our thanks to the United Nations, which has already given us technical assistance. I also take this opportunity to appeal to countries and international organizations to help us properly to organize the elections.

Because of the tumultuous history of my country, peace and stability are constant concerns of my Government, which seeks only to make a reality of the legitimate aspirations of the Chadian people to economic and social well-being.

National reconciliation was rightly one of the main recommendations of the Sovereign National Conference, for trust and harmony among the people of Chad must be rebuilt. The establishment of a national reconciliation commission and the proclamation of a general amnesty and a unilateral cease-fire throughout the country are demonstrations of the avowed will of the Government to reunite Chadians. Some people in Chadian political life consider that the final step in achieving this objective is to organize a round table. The Government is in favour, as long as the other participants are not limited to the armed opposition and as long as it does not threaten the achievements of the Sovereign National Conference, the democratic process, or the established timetable.

Political freedom is truly beneficial only when it is based on an economic situation from which all the population gain. My country faces an economic and financial crisis due to external factors, aggravated by desertification, an uncertain climate and the fact that it is land-locked. My Government has taken a series of measures to improve the financial situation, while strengthening its control over debt servicing and trying to exert similar control over the civil service and the army. These measures have had satisfactory results and should be supported by our partners.

While we are pleased that the cold war has ended, there remain, as I said earlier, many matters causing great concern. The international community is confronting some problems that negatively impact on the evolution of our countries and require collective thought.

With regard to peace, since the last session the picture has continued to be one of contrasts.

In Angola, my Government is heartened by the progress achieved since the Lusaka Accords, which have opened up great prospects for the consolidation of peace and the reconstruction of the country.

Similarly, we welcome the signing in Washington on 28 September of the agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This is an important milestone on the path towards a just and lasting settlement of the crisis, which has lasted far too long.

My country also welcomed the agreements reached by the Liberian factions on 19 August. With the setting up of the Council of State, we can hope that the six years of nightmare are now coming to an end for the people of Liberia.

Elsewhere, the situation is much less favourable. Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and Sierra Leone are still powder kegs, experiencing loss of human life and massive displacements of populations.

My country is also concerned about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the very heartland of Europe, where the spiral of war seems to hold sway over the logic of peace. We encourage the patient and tireless efforts of the international community to settle this conflict, with respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We would make an urgent appeal to the various protagonists to demonstrate perspicacity and political courage in order to put an end to these human tragedies.

Foreseeable causes of conflict in most States are behaviour and attitudes revealing a desire for hegemony that threatens territorial integrity and harms good-neighbourly relations. We must appeal to leaders to show wisdom and refrain from such conduct; rather, they should work together in a spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance to implement joint development programmes.

For its part, Chad fully supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of all disputes. In this spirit, on the basis of resolutions of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, we again appeal for the lifting of the embargo on the Libyan people, which has a negative impact on neighbouring countries.

My country supports the efforts under way in our Organization in the field of peace-keeping operations, particularly in the consolidation of peace in various parts of the world. Thus, it is making its modest contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.In the same spirit, Chad supports Argentina's "White Helmets" initiative.

Africa, for its part, took a decisive step by establishing, in 1993, a mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts; it is already operational. We call for close cooperation between the United Nations and this mechanism under Chapter VIII of the Charter and for multifaceted support from the entire international community.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, my country welcomes its indefinite extension. This is a major step, because, since the establishment of the United Nations, the prevention of the dissemination of nuclear weapons has been one of the major goals of Member States. Chad fully supports the negotiations currently under way in the Conference on Disarmament for the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

My country welcomed the Secretary-General's convening of an international meeting on mine clearance from 5 to 7 July 1995 at Geneva. We greatly appreciate the positive reaction of the international community, which, by announcing a contribution of more than $20 million, demonstrated its determination to struggle against this invisible, pernicious and constant menace.

Chad, a large part — about one third — of whose territory is infested with mines of all types, supports the Secretary-General's statement that, by damaging local communities, by contributing to emptying vast territories of their population and by preventing the return of refugees, mines are obstacles to economic and social development. Hence, we appeal to the international community to help my country rid itself of these death machines.

The unbearable pictures of thousands of mutilated men, women and children throughout the world cry out to us. That is why my country stands ready to support any measure that would lead to the total prohibition of the production and sale of such weapons.

Peace and development are the major objectives of our Organization. So far as economic and social development is concerned, in recent years many summits and conferences have been held with the goal of improving the living standards of peoples. But the results have not met the expectations. In fact, as the *Human Development Report 1995* states,

> "More than three-fourths of the world's people live in developing countries, but they enjoy only 16 per cent of the world's income." *(Human Development Report 1995, p. 14)*

Africa, where the majority of the least developed countries are located, is in a most precarious situation. The continual decline in export income condemns Africa to such an increase in the servicing of its debt that any development activity is futile.

What can one say about structural adjustment and economic liberalization measures, which frequently have a negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of our society? Most of the initiatives to promote the development of Africa in the 1990s have not brought the hoped-for results.

We venture to hope that the Agenda for Development, as a prop for the Agenda for Peace, will foster a genuine spirit of solidarity and partnership in the international community.

We believe that, 50 years after its creation, and despite the outstanding results it has achieved in some areas, the United Nations must continue to change in order to meet new and increasingly complex challenges.

In this connection, we reiterate our support for the process of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic, social and related areas. We emphasize, however, that this necessary action must not lead to marginalization of the developing countries.

Chad has already expressed its position on the expansion of the Security Council, the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The principle of equitable geographical representation must be observed.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that our deliberations will be fully successful and that the twenty-first century will witness the beginning of a genuine rebirth of our international Organization, so that it can work decisively towards the greatness of mankind.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.